

# Implementing Actions

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The four *Plan* elements preceding this chapter contain an array of actions through which it is intended that the *Plan* be implemented. Those actions are organized below, not by *Plan* element, but rather by the board or official that is expected to guide at least the initial steps towards each of those actions actually being taken. Not surprisingly, the Planning Board has the largest agenda to initiate, but the Selectmen, Town Manager, Conservation Commission, and Historical Commission all are also intended to play initiating roles. For a number of the actions, the initiator has not yet been designated or perhaps is not yet in existence. Further, designating initial responsibility for certain of the actions is appropriately deferred until the Transportation Element of the *Comprehensive Plan* is undertaken, as is scheduled for the near future, along with the (Public) Facilities and Implementation Strategies elements. As these action items move forward, efforts will also involve virtually all the agencies of Town government, some standing committees and several other community service and advocacy organizations.

Listed at the end of each action item are references for where within the four elements a more complete context for and description of the action can be found. Also listed is an indication of the time period within which the action appropriately might be undertaken:

- “Near Term:” items to be undertaken and perhaps completed within the next year or so.
- “Intermediate Term:” items to be undertaken within the next three years or so.
- “Long Term:” items that can or must take longer than three years, reflecting level of difficulty, prerequisites, or level of priority.
- “Ongoing:” items that by their nature are not point in time ones but rather are carried out continuously over time.

When the preparation of further elements of the *Comprehensive Plan* (particularly “Transportation”) draws towards completion, additional implementing actions will be added to the Town’s agenda. That will create an appropriate point at which to systematically look back on the implementation accomplishments of the year or so between now and then and to reassess who should do what, when they should do it, and what resources should be provided. Similar reassessments should be repeated from time to time in the years following that to assure that the *Plan* remains an importantly relevant part of the Town’s activities, and not just part of its literature.

## SELECTMEN

### CROSS-CUTTING POLICIES

Two actions, one dealing with land and one dealing with taxation, are to be initiated by the Selectmen, reflecting their unique role in relation to policies that cut across narrower interest areas.

- **Surplus land.** Establish policy that in acting on the disposition of “surplus” public land (e.g. tax title parcels, Met State land when it is transferred), priority should be given to the two uses for which land is key: diversity-serving housing and preservation of important open spaces. [Land Use 1.2, Housing 1.7: NEAR TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Conservation Commission, LexHAB, and Lexington Housing Authority.

- **Tax rate policy.** Establish policy that there will be a periodic long-term review of both the splitting of the tax rate and other tax rate matters undertaken and publicized to assure that an appropriate balance is maintained between residential and non-residential tax burdens and that to the degree possible, tax policy is encouraging the types of investment that the Town seeks. [Economic 3.2(b): INTERMEDIATE TERM]

Possible additional initiators/actors: Assessor, Special Study Committee

### BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR HOUSING

Lexington’s policy commitment to housing and its past housing achievements can be matched in the future only given new structure and resources.

- **Housing infrastructure.** Explore housing organizational roles and capacities, initiating changes in them, possibly including creation of a new body, such as a Housing Partnership Committee, to fill the void revealed through these studies and the lack of a suitable vehicle for implementing a number of the actions. [Housing 6.1: NEAR TERM].
- **Housing funding.** Commit Town funds for housing, whether through the Community Preservation Act, linkage, or other means. [Housing 5.1: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: CPA Committee (if affirmatively voted); Lexington Housing Authority; LexHAB; Fair Housing Committee.

### BUILDING RESOURCE-EFFICIENCY INTO THE SYSTEM

Many innovative approaches to avoiding resource waste and thereby reducing costs and improving the environment are contained in the *Plan*, and deserve an organizational framework to assure implementation.

- **Resource Organization.** Explore creation of a new organization, provision of new resources to an existing organization, or other structural measure to provide leadership for the actions listed below under “Resource Savers: Helping to Reduce Waste.” [Resources 3.5: NEAR TERM].

## TOWN MANAGER

### BUILDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

Meeting the challenge of appropriate economic development in a mature community with diverse perspectives on the meaning of “appropriate” will require a careful balancing of interests.

- **Economic Development Infrastructure.** Explore creation of an organization, whether short-term or permanent, or provision of new resources to an existing organization or other structural measure to provide leadership for the actions listed below under “Building Better Business.” [NEAR TERM].

Possible additional actors/initiators: Economic Development Officer, Lexington Center Committee, Business Roundtable, and Chamber of Commerce.

## PLANNING BOARD

### DEALING WITH TOWN CHARACTER

The proliferation of out-of-scale houses, tree-cutting, damage to valued architectural resources, and loss of coherent town form are examples of the range of concerns expressed centering on sensitivity to desired town character.

- **House Impact Provisions.** Prepare a package of measures for addressing the Town’s concerns over out-of-scale houses. [Land Use 2.6(a), Housing 2, Resources 5.3(a): NEAR TERM].

Note: initial package of house impact control measures is nearing completion as of this writing and will go to Town meeting 2002 this spring.

- **Initiating a designer’s effort.** Hold discussions with various groups having design roles and capacities, including the Design Advisory Committee, the Historic District Commission, the Historical Commission, the Lexington Center Committee, and the Lexington Garden Club to determine how best the actions listed under “Designers Guiding Town Character” below can be carried forward. That might result in either creation of a task force or identification of an existing organization to subsequently lead the effort. [INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: {From the groups in the paragraph above}: Lexington Center Committee, Design Advisory Committee.

## CREATING REGULATIONS TO HELP HOUSING

Zoning and other local regulations are often perceived as root causes of housing problems, but those measures can also be constructive tools for addressing the concern.

- **Inclusionary zoning.** Broadly mandate that housing developments include affordable units. [Land Use 2.2(d), Housing 3.2: NEAR TERM].
- **Housing in business districts.** Explore allowing housing in some business districts, including the Center. [Land Use 2.1(a), Economic 1.2 and 1.3, Housing 1.1: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Lexington Center Committee, Chamber of Commerce, and LexHAB.

- **Affordability density bonus.** Revise density and impact bonuses to strengthen housing affordability incentives. [Land Use 2.2(d), Housing 3.1: LONG TERM].
- **Affordability *quid pro quo*.** Formalize through amendment to regulations that some contribution to affordability is expected where relief from usual rules is sought. [Housing 1.8: NEAR TERM.]

Possible additional initiators/actors: LexHAB, Housing Partnership or similar new entity, Fair Housing Committee.

- **Small-scale elderly housing.** Provide incentives for small-scale age-restricted housing [Land Use 2.2(a), Housing 1.3: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: LexHAB, Housing Partnership or similar new entity, Fair Housing Committee.

- **Cohousing and other new formats.** Explore rules to assure that they do not inadvertently obstruct new approaches to housing, such as cohousing. [Housing 1.5: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: LexHAB, Housing Partnership or similar new entity, Fair Housing Committee.

- **Adaptive reuse for housing.** Facilitate reuse of existing non-residential structures for housing. [Land Use 2.2(c), Housing 1.6: LONG TERM].

- **Modernize house rules.** Creatively explore modernization of the rules about what you can do with your existing house to accommodate contemporary work and living styles, e.g., telecommuting, computer-based home businesses, live/work arrangements, accessory apartments [Land Use 2.1(a) and 2.2(b) Economic 1.1, Housing 1.4 and 4: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

- **Protect existing resources.** Following experience with House Impact Provisions to be acted upon in the near term, consider further measures to protect existing modest-price housing resources, one example of which might be tear-down site reuse delay. [Housing 2.1 and 2.2, Resources 5.2(b): LONG TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actor: Housing Partnership or similar new entity, Fair Housing Committee.

## PROMOTING APPROPRIATE BUSINESS

Carefully designed regulation can assure that business development serving the Town's interests is effectively encouraged.

- **Modernize Neighborhood Business District zoning.** Update use controls to employ contemporary categories, and to facilitate mixed uses. [Land Use 2.1(a), Economic 1.4, and Resources 2.1: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Several existing Civic or Neighborhood Associations.

- **Specify non-residential benefit expectations.** Create a system mirroring the residential "Development with Significant Public Benefit" to offer incentive for special trip reduction efforts, "green building," housing support, etc. [Land Use 1.3 and 2.5(b), Resource 1.2(e), Economic 3.1: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Business Roundtable, LexHAB, Building Commissioner.

## "GREENING" DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of ways in which existing regulations could be refined in ways that are protective of resources and other Town concerns without imposing substantial burdens.

- **Allow narrower streets.** Revise Subdivision Regulation standards to allow a lower-impact design standard [Resources 1.2(d): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Mandate subdivision open space.** Through use of special permits, authorize requirement of open space even if applicant seeks conventional subdivision. [Land Use 2.4(a) and (b), Resources 1.1(a): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Refined cluster.** Enhance existing cluster provisions, adding a lower-density but possibly by-right cluster option as a true open space residential provision. [Land Use 2.3(d): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Strengthen controls on chemicals, landscaping materials, water use.** Revise both Zoning and Subdivision Regulations to specify such requirements or incentives as a complement to other existing controls under Board of Health or other jurisdictions. [Resources 1.2(a): LONG TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Board of Health, Conservation Commission. Public Works.

- **Explore enabling transfer of development rights.** Consider allowing preservation of open space on one parcel to permit higher density on another parcel. [Resources 1.1(b): LONG TERM].
- **Reexamine impervious surface controls.** Extend impervious surface controls to all residential development, resolve current disincentives for clusters, and address related lot coverage and recharge issues. [Land Use 2.3(b); Resources 1.2(c): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Limit allowable grade change on residential building sites.** Require special review if change from existing grade exceeds a stated limit. [Resources 1.2 (b): NEAR TERM].

## IMPROVING REGULATORY SPEED AND PREDICTABILITY

Unnecessarily burdensome and slow regulatory processes are costly to both applicants and Town staff, and regulations which fail to have predictable decision outcomes are damaging to both those who would develop and those affected by that development.

- **Expedite regulatory processes.** Explore removal of unnecessary delays and burdensome procedures, in particular for selected, desired uses or land use changes, where doing so results in no loss of assurance of strong compliance. [Land Use 1.4, Housing 6.2: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Business Roundtable, Selectmen, and possible Special Study Committee.

- **Improve planned development commercial (CD) and residential (RD) predictability.** Provide better policy guidance for the creation of planned development commercial (CD) and residential (RD) districts through, among other things, use of performance-based controls. [Land use 1.1: LONG TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Business Roundtable, Selectmen, possible Special Study Committee, Building Commissioner, and Town Manager.

## ASSURING POLICY CONSISTENCY

Maintain a well-structured overview of land use change, and refine course accordingly.

- **Observe residential/non-residential “balance.”** Note inevitable departures from the policies of this *Plan* over time, and if necessary take remedial action on either the *Plan* or actions to be guided by it. [Land Use 3.1: ONGOING.]

Possible additional initiators/actors: Vision 2020 Implementation Committee

- **Periodically assess links between land use and the environment.** In the same spirit, note over time whether corrective change to either the *Plan* or ongoing actions would be appropriate in light of environmental and sustainability consequences of land use change over time. [Land Use 3.1: ONGOING.]

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### PROTECTING OPEN SPACE AND RESOURCES

This *Plan* calls for efforts to protect at least one-third of the Town's remaining land resources, as well as calling for a number of other resource protection efforts to which these actions are intended to contribute.

- **Funding for open space.** Gain a local financial commitment for funding of open space acquisition through one means or another, whether through the Community Preservation Act, capital facilities plan reservation, or other means. [Land Use 2.3(a), Resources 1.1(d): NEAR TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: CPA Committee (if program is adopted).

- **Continue and strengthen current efforts:**
  - An aggressive program for open space land donations. [Resources 1.1(e): ONGOING].
  - An environmental monitoring program, as suggested in *Vision 2020*. [Resources 3.4: ONGOING].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Board of Health, Tree Committee/Tree Warden.

- Other natural resource programs, e.g. tree planting. [Resources 3.3: ONGOING].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Tree Committee/Tree Warden.

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION

### PROTECTING OUR LEGACY

Lexington's rich and still-evolving historical legacy deserves strong efforts towards its strengthened management.

- **Prepare a Historic Preservation Plan.** Building on the base of inventory work already done, develop policies, strategies, and a course of actions for managing cultural resources. [Resources 5.1: LONG TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Historic Districts Commission.

- **Explore how to fund preservation.** Potential means include the Community Preservation Act, special tax treatment for historic home improvements, tax credits, and tax increment financing. [Resources 5.4: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actor: CPA Committee (if program is adopted).

- **Protect archeological resources.** Explore development of local regulations to complement state and federal ones. [Resources 5.3(c): LONG TERM].
- **Strengthen and refine demolition rules.** Seek to make the process smoother and more inclusive. [Resources 5.3(d): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Explore “Battle Road Corridor Overlay District.”** Seek resources to make the entirety of the Battle Road a recognizable and well-managed resource. [Resources 4.2: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Historic Districts Commission.

- **Continue Revolutionary War documenting.** Document, archive, and make educational use of information from that era. [Resources 4.1: ONGOING].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Volunteers in a possible Special Study Committee.

## INITIATORS TO BE DESIGNATED OR ORGANIZED

The following dozen or so actions are best carried out through efforts to be led by initiators not yet formed or designated. In some cases the initiators may turn out to be an existing organization with a new charge, or a short-duration special task group, or a new addition to the Town’s organizational structure.

### DESIGNERS: GUIDING TOWN CHARACTER

The following are items to be initiated by a group having expertise at and interest in design and management of Town character, created or identified as outlined above under “Planning Board.”

- **Explore “light” historic districts.** Devise a light-handed means of helping to protect historic resources in more areas of the Town, including relatively new ones. [Resources 5.2(a): LONG TERM].

Possible initiators/actors: Historic Districts Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Design Advisory Committee, special study committee.



- **Strengthen diversity of neighborhood character.** Explore how Zoning as well as architectural controls can contribute to underscoring the diverse character of Lexington's neighborhoods. [Land Use 2.6(d): INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible initiators/actors: Planning Board.

- **Articulate Lexington's identity.** Gateways might be given special character, and identity-providing qualities might be supported throughout the Town making it a visually identifiable place. [Resources 4.3: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible initiators/actors: Planning Board, civic and service organizations.

- **Protect "special places."** Identify and then find means of protecting the special places that contribute to the Town's character and attractiveness. [Resources 5.2(d): LONG TERM].
- **Avoid unbroken seas of asphalt.** As proposed in *Vision 2020*, explore controls to supplement current landscaping rules with requirements that will preclude large-scale parking areas unbroken except by relatively modest landscaping, using buildings, grade changes, and major landscaping to maintain appropriate scale. [Land Use 2.6(c): INTERMEDIATE TERM].
- **Strengthen preservation incentives.** Zoning's incentives for preservation, though new, might be strengthened to promote their use. [Resources 5.3(b): Intermediate Term].

Possible initiators/actors: CPA Committee if program adopted, Planning Board.

- **Explore the Scenic Roads Act.** Trees and stone walls along designated roads could get special protection through this widely used Act. [Resources 5.2(c): LONG TERM].
- **Explore a building materials recycling yard.** Saving and finding new life for trim, doors, mantles, and other useful items saved from inevitable demolition. [Housing 7.2: LONG TERM].

## SUPPORTING HOUSING DIVERSITY AND OPPORTUNITY

These items are to be initiated by a group having housing-related skills and interest in supporting a diverse Lexington, created or identified as stated above under "Selectmen."

- **Explore housing funding potentials.** Regulations and good efforts need to be joined with financial resources. Creative approaches need to be explored. [Housing 5.3: ONGOING].

Possible initiators/actors: Selectmen, Planning Board, and LexHAB. CPA Committee (if program is adopted).

- **Join a regional housing consortium.** A number of Lexington’s neighbors, through having joined together, now gain funds otherwise unavailable. Lexington could do the same. [Housing 5.2: LONG TERM].
- **Support regional or State “linkage” explorations.** This could provide a fair and effective approach to addressing housing impacts of business development. [Housing 3.3: ONGOING.].

## RESOURCE SAVERS: HELPING TO REDUCE WASTE

A group having resource conservation skills and interest in encouraging efficient use of resources, identified or created as described above under “Selectmen,” is to initiate the following actions, which will also be closely related to the future Comprehensive Plan element on Public Services and Facilities.

- **Use Town facilities & operations as a demonstration of good resource efficiency and waste reduction practices.** Through its own example, the Town could encourage its citizens and businesses to reduce costs through reducing solid waste generated, increasing the recycling rate, or making use of renewable energy sources. [Land Use 2.5 (b); Resources 3.1: ONGOING.]

Possible initiators/actors: Public Works, Selectmen.

- **Consider providing incentives for development that has low non-renewable energy demand and other resource-efficient design approaches.** National green building design standards such as LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) or currently proposed Massachusetts green design standards could be included among the special permit criteria by which projects are judged. The benefits to Lexington could include improved air quality through reduced emissions, healthy interior environments, and lower power requirements and costs, as well as making a contribution towards broader environmental goals. [Land Use 2.5(a): LONG TERM]
- **Develop educational materials to encourage home design that reduces environmental impact.** Information provided to prospective Lexington homeowners, builders and lenders could explain the connections among how homes are sited, designed, and constructed and their resulting impacts on land, wildlife, water, air, and community character as well as on long term operating costs and global environmental deterioration. [Housing 7.1: LONG TERM]

## BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS

The *Plan*’s action intentions for economic development emphasize “better, not bigger,” and continuation of directions already being taken, including the focusing of administrative efforts on supporting retail activity in the Center. The following are to be undertaken through a group created or identified by the Town Manager as stated above under “Town Manager.”

- **Flexible use change in the Center.** Pursue revisions to cure the inadvertent obstacles that Zoning creates for change of use within retailing in the Center. [Economic 2.2: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible initiators/actors: Economic Development Officer, Lexington Center Committee, Business Roundtable.

- **Help helpful businesses.** Explore how best to encourage those businesses that serve local residents, workers, businesses. [Land Use 2.6(e): ONGOING].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Economic Development Officer, Lexington Center Committee, Chamber of Commerce.

- **Support creation of a Business Improvement District.** Such an organization would bring together business interests in the Center to do collectively what they can't do individually [Economic 2.3, Resources 3.2: INTERMEDIATE TERM].

Possible additional initiators/actors: Economic Development Officer, Lexington Center Committee, Chamber of Commerce.

## WITHIN THE FUTURE TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

The following actions identified in the first four elements of the evolving *Comprehensive Plan* will gain stronger context and appropriateness for full consideration in the next phase of *Plan* development when a Transportation Element is prepared later in the comprehensive planning process in 2002-03. At that point, timing (near, intermediate, or long term) can be selected for these items if they are still being proposed, and lead agencies and initiators identified.

### EXPLORE ACHIEVING FEWER AND SHORTER AUTO TRIPS.

Rather than adapting roads to accommodate more cars, we can shape development to produce relatively less travel in relation to activity levels.

- **Explore locating higher densities near retail and good transport.** [Land Use 2.1(b), Housing 1.2].
- **Explore the feasibility and impact of transit-oriented design.** Design rules can facilitate alternative travel modes, especially for commercial and industrial development. [Land Use 2.1(d), Economic 1.7].
- **Trip generation density rules in Zoning.** Explore measuring and controlling “density” in trips per acre as well as in floor area per acre, then obliging high trip-density uses to offset that with open space contributions. [Land Use 2.3(c), Resources 1.1(c)].

- **Strengthen Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** Lexington pioneered in adopting TDM rules, but their limited effectiveness suggests various ways of strengthening them, including regional approaches that are of a non-regulatory and pro-active nature, and support for transit links, car/van pools, ride guarantees, zip car franchises where there is critical mass, etc. [Land Use 2.1(c), Resources 2.2 and 2.3, Economic 1.5, 1.6 and 1.8].

#### OTHER TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ACTIONS

- **Accommodate tour buses.** Visitor auto trips and parking demand can be reduced through better bus transport. [Land Use 2.1(e)].
- **Seek land use role at Hanscom.** Perhaps the Town can act with some degree of authority on some land use actions within Hanscom. [Land Use 2.6(b)].